

Commission on Aging Strategic Communication Plan

Objectives:

1. To support and advance priorities of the Commission through effective communication.
2. To advise and monitor County Government on information and communication needed on matters of importance to older adults.

Key Audiences:

1. Decision makers – County Executive, County Council, Senior Sub-Cabinet, Office of Aging and Disability, Area Office on Aging, Public Information Office, Technology Office (Internet), Office of Community Partnership
2. Stakeholders

Messages:

1. **Montgomery County has a burgeoning older population** of both vulnerable and vital residents over age 65 in need of County planning and services and an important resource to the County.
2. **The Commission on Aging, on behalf of the County's older population, calls for a comprehensive vision and agenda** addressing housing, transportation, recreation, nutrition and other areas essential to successful aging.
3. **Current priorities of Commission on Aging:** (cite 3)

Considerations:

1. Determine if topic is major and newsworthy to decide how much publicity is warranted and whether all steps below are needed.
2. Develop timeline for preparation, letters, meetings
3. Seek to inform/educate, gain support and collaborate with groups other than stakeholders that influence decisionmakers, such as Chamber of Commerce or issue groups (health, housing).
4. Coordinate, by informing PIO and Aging Office in advance, when planning to reach out to news media.
5. There may be times when it is necessary to inform and contact state and/or federal government officials on specific issues.
6. While not the primary audience for COA communication, the general public would be informed through COA's broader communication and might then act to help influence decisionmakers.
7. Sensitivity will be required as other groups have needs, too, and intergenerational collaboration may be needed.

Approach:

1. Use all available means to communicate COA's key messages and priorities.

2. Identify and reach out to stakeholders and other groups that influence decision makers so COA can partner with them and leverage their resources in communicating messages to their respective constituencies.
3. Engage with and bring communication needs to the Senior Sub-Cabinet Work Group on Communication and Outreach.
4. Seek and “train” COA spokespersons.
5. Work collaboratively, combining resources and expertise of COA committees, to make sure the best message gets to the right audience most effectively.
6. Write letters announcing item/issue to decision makers, stakeholders, and influential groups.
7. Develop information/press kit folder of material for meetings with decision makers, stakeholders, and media: COA fact sheet on demographic change and issues of concern; press release and/or Q-A on news item, COA pamphlet, COA Annual Report, recent budget testimony
8. Put announcements and priorities on COA Web site. Have Announcement section. Place link from senior Web site indicating “news” on COA Web Site. Make use of “Seniors Today” to communicate developments.
9. Develop Facebook page and use for announcements, photos.
10. Arrange meetings to educate on the demographics, diversity, and growth of the County’s older population; communicate key messages and priorities, and have dialogue with:
 - a. County leaders (executives, directors), County Council members
 - b. Stakeholders
 - c. Influential Groups (i.e., Chamber of Commerce, interfaith coalitions, foundations, and intergenerational groups)
 - d. New coalitions, existing or created, such as intergenerational groups
11. Arrange introductory/educational meetings for COA spokesperson (Chairperson or others) with editors and senior issue reporters (Gazette, Almanac, Beacon, Washington Post, Washington Times) to inform and seek support (editorial).
12. Prepare for talks with stakeholders and media with talking points on key messages and Q-A to anticipate difficult questions.
13. Provide speakers, when requested, to inform senior groups and senior centers. (Requests likely as news occurs)

Example: COA Call for Action

1. Send letters to County decision makers including candidates for State Legislature
2. Put Call to Action on COA Web site – arrange link from Senior Web Site.
3. Arrange series of meetings with County officials including County Executive, head of DHS and key members of County Council.

4. Arrange follow-up group meeting with Stakeholders to continue dialogue and feedback, and collaborate on effective outreach.
5. Write/speak to Chamber of Commerce, GROWS and identify/add other influential groups.
6. Arrange educational meetings with media; coordinate in advance with PIO.
7. Seek editorial support on need for a vision and agenda for County senior population.
8. Identify and prepare COA speakers for meetings with decision-makers, stakeholders, public (seniors).
9. Develop information kit for meetings.
10. Develop talking points, Q-A for COA speaker preparation
11. Draft letter for stakeholders to send to decision makers

Rev. Draft 10/07/10